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Tokyo PC Newsletter

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SEZ THE PREZ

HERE'S one thing most of us have in common, and that many of wish we didn't have to know so much about: *DOS*, or "Disk Operating System". (Some people might prefer to call it "Dastardly Offensive Satan"). DOS is the magic connection between your PC and any software you wish to use.

A friend writes from Seattle, the home of his employer Microsoft, *DOS*'s big daddy. Talk about taking care of your employees. This company is more Japanese than Mitsubishi.

"Since I've been here Microsoft has added two softball fields, one soccer field, and two sand volleyball courts, doubled the size of the indoor sports club, and quadrupled the number of Friday beer bashes. Our offsites have been to Whistler and Hawaii, and as a team-building exercise we took 6 weeks of sailing lessons (together, of course)... After three years as loyal worker bee, Microsoft hands out a Cross pen set for recognition of the tour of duty."

He also speaks of his boss (Bill Gates): "Vision. Few companies have it. Few companies have a guy smart enough to articulate it. My boss has it, and can articulate it. If you want to see and hear the future, you should order his videotaped speech at Comdex this year. You can order it by calling 1-800-541-1261. (*Not YOU of course, but your friends in the U.S.*) It's about $10.00."

Those of you who missed the last meeting missed not only a great program, but also the artful, poetic and timely cajoling and gentle browbeating of our earthy, enigmatic and ethereal editor. I don't know if he will deign to put the same plea in print, but I would love to see it in the newsletter before the new world order takes over with a new jargon.

TPC is still on the lookout for a public relations manager, to continue to get the word out about the group, and a membership chairman who will use her or his guile and wit to swell our numbers. Tony Whitman will continue to take care of the membership data base, so a new membership person can concentrate on recruiting and coddling membership. Call me or other board members to volunteer. You'll be glad you did.

-SW

VIEW FROM THE MASTHEAD

How embarrassing. Sue asks me to print what I said at the last meeting. Here it is as best I can reconstruct it from the notes I scribbled that afternoon while getting my crew cut to match my editorial budget.

"This has been the 11th day of *Operation Foolscap*, the mission to produce the April issue of the Newsletter. Activity has been light in the TPC Theatre of Operations, with members of the Editing/Publishing Coalition sustaining extremely light contributions from the forces arrayed in what we refer to as "The Writers' Bloc." As of 1900 hours, only 2 PTO's, an RSVP, and an articulated feature review have succumbed, mostly to friendly editing. It would appear, however, that lines of inspirational flow have been largely interdicted in the TPCTO, and unless substantially increased quantities of matériel impact in the editorial arena before the March 16th deadline, *Operation Foolscap* will be truncated with extreme prejudice and lead to 5 years of films about disgruntled former editorial personnel running amok with automatic kerning pencils in badly punctuated jungles of discontinuous technical prose."

[Only you, sitting in front of (or are you behind?) your copy of this newsletter, can say which of these scenarii became the case.]

-CC

SYSOPERA

Mysterious are the ways of the Sysop. He, *primus inter pares BBSiensis*, the Hermit of the Keyboard, powerful, yet invisible, sits like Zeus on his throne of binary thunder, always alert, always ready to press the spacebar and rush through the jungles of menus to your rescue... or destruction. A Kind and Loving Sysop is he, who forgives many an X-modem download (especially if followed by a generous upload). But an Angry Sysop can he also become, whose wrath makes the hard disks slow their rotations and the bytes escape in panic.

So, noble users, study the ways of your BBS, for out of all virtues, patience is not the one given to Gods and Sysops.

Harken ye humble Uploaders and sinful Online Readers as the Master in front of your eyes lists the:

10.COM

1.COM: I am thy Beloved Sysop, Master of the Flying Byte, who has given thee thy SL. Thou shalt have no other Sysops before me.

2.COM: Thou shalt not compose ASCII graphics images while on line.

3.COM: Thou shalt not page the Sysop for Chat in vain, especially if he's left the BBS in "Sysop Available" mode and went to sleep. Errare Sysoperaticum est.

4.COM: Remember the Saturday to keep it holy, for in five days the Sysop did nothing (or very little) to the BBS, as the weekend is his Sysoping time.

5.COM: Honour thy President and thy Vice President and thy Treasurer and thy Programs Director and thy Newsletter Publishers and Editors and thy Librarian, that thy Executive Board minutes shall be long in the land.

6.COM: Thou shall not Delete messages nor Remove files before the Sysop has had a chance to read them. After that thou SHALL remove your old uploads and substitute newer, better versions for the old ones.

7.COM: Thou shall not commit online-reading. Not to mention online-writing.

8.COM: Thou shall not copy the software from Toshiba's booth at Harumi Data Show.

9.COM:Thou shall not bear false protocol. Only *Z-modem* and *Y-modem* are fast and blessed by thy Sysop.

10.COM: Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's HDD, nor his CPU, nor his RAM, nor his *Windows 3.0*, nor his FAX/9600BPS modem, nor any HW/SW that is thy neighbor's.

Those are the laws every onliner has to abide by. Those who do will be rewarded by having their words made ethereal. For those who don't — PKUNZIP is waiting for them...

-MB

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SHAREWARE — Abet, Resell, or File?

The following BBS discussion was sparked by the quoting in full by ***Sigi Rindler*** *of an advertisement for computer systems bundled with "10 MB of Public Domain Software." Ruthlessly edited, it still retains some of the distinctly acerbic character that helped make it one of the livelier topics of the March BBS polylogue.*

Wolfgang Bechstein: Those computers from Okinawa sound like a fairly good deal for people who don't want to reach across the big pond for their sources. But one thing grates on me: "10 MEGABYTES OF PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE INCLUDING: WORD PROCESSOR, DATABASE MGR, SPREADSHEET . . . INSTALLED ON HARD DRIVE W/POWER MENU. . . ." This most probably is largely *shareware* which is being used to sell the equipment while giving the user the impression that it is *free*. Questionable practice if you ask me.

Sigi Rindler: Well, for some reason I wasn't going to ask YOU and it doesn't "grate" on me at all, Wolfgang! Of course, this is shareware and freeware and an effective sales gimmick. It's probably legal too, and the software makers won't object, because it spreads their name. What the heck does it matter if the company gives you 10 MB of *free software* or calls it shareware? I bet that 90% of those who read this won't bother about the "questionable advertising". I would never pay for a program just to fiddle around, but I would if it is useful for my purpose and if I want to get an upgrade. Eventually I'll buy the next version of a borrowed "tryware" if I have any use. Contrary to your attitude, my motto is "first try, then buy"! It's like buying a car: No test ride, no money. And if I do take a ride, am I obliged (or expected) to pour my money over the salesman right away? I am a strong believer that this rule should me applied to any other merchandise including software. I hate those packages sealed in plastic and don't like to buy a pig in a poke.

WB: Sigi, you did not ask for my advice in particular, that is true, but we software policemen HAFF VAYS TO MAKE YOU LISTEN! My advice (again unsolicited) is to understand the difference between hardware vendors bundling Microsoft *Windows*, mice etc. with their systems (such add-ons have to be *paid for* by the vendor, albeit presumably with a considerable bulk discount) and other vendors filling their systems with shareware and advertising it as public domain, i.e. free, software, [rather than to] throw around the tired old (and wrong) analogy of buying a car when defending the "right" to "try" any software within reach. Sigi, you buy not software but the right to use it, unless you go for the source code (at a price closer to what cars cost, where you would indeed be entitled to a few rides around the block). When was the last time you tested a consumer item or a service, costing a few tens of thousands of yen at most, in your home at leisure for an extended period? Do you let your customers "test buy" your translations (and let them refuse payment if they don't like the way you handled certain phrases)?

SR: Well, I do test household items like TVs, audio equipment, etc., in the shop, and I trust blueberry jam, washing powder, and shaving cream. People browse in books, but you can't do that with software at all. Occasionally my translations are tested in Germany, and if they turned out to be bad, I would have to accept refusal of payment.

WB: Shareware authors, in spite of the low price of their products, are actually the ones who do give you the closest you can get to "try before you buy". But this only works if there is enough honesty or intelligence on the side of the users to read a few lines of documentation and decide whether a) something is free, b) a contribution is requested, and/or c) it is worth the contribution.

SR: Yes, I admit that kind of documentation doesn't bother me much. However, I have registered a couple of shareware programs and all major commercial ones — merely for the upgrade and technical support and not out of overrated honesty.

Peter Evans: Wolfgang's point was that software called by its authors "shareware" should not be described as "free". What he might have added is that it can be particularly reprehensible for such shareware (or indeed freeware) to be "given away" as a sales gimmick for a product that will profit someone else. Note that I say "can be". Yes, there are shareware and freeware authors who openly welcome *any* form of distribution. However, if you [care to look], you will see many clear prohibitions of exactly [this] kind of distribution. For example: [*Here's only the*

most lucid and complete of several quoted. Ruthless Ed.]

(Rick Hillier's *CatDisk*, ver. 4.43:) No one may use CATDISK as a promotion for any commercial venture or as an enticement for the user to pay for any program, product, or service unless they have received the express written permission of the program's author.

Now, I realize it is perfectly possible that your dealer in Okinawa avoids such programs or has obtained permission to distribute them. But Sigi, you might like to reconsider your assertion that "the software makers won't object. . . ."

SR: Peter, actually I expected you to be one of the first sheriffs to kick my ass in support of Wolfgang's point. Thank God that you guys can be counted on one person's fingers. I am not against right and order in a general sense, but will never understand why some people get so excited about things that aren't necessarily their business.

PE: We all have gaps in our capacities to understand. (Mine is of understanding why people get excited about spectator sports or television "personalities".) Your viewpoint somehow tenuously resembles that of the Chinese government when impertinent foreigners ask about Tibet and Tiananmen.

SR: I am probably going to buy a system from this company. Guess why! Not for the 10 MB of legal or illegal software on the HD, but for the irresistible price. I don't care how legal or how wrong the company's advertising is if I get a good computer for a good price.

PE: Not an unreasonable position. But if you are uninterested in the company's advertising or some of the contents thereof, why post it on this BBS?

SR: You and Wolfgang can buy directly from an IBM outlet where nothing is loaded on the HD and purchase MS-DOS on top of it! You'll be spared nightmares of guilt until your very end. Meanwhile, I am still torn between who of you both guys is going to get the ribbons and medals for your uniforms. Stand by for the award.

PE: Our notorious and nauseating honesty and altruism will probably lead us to donate them all to UNICEF; even so, we'll invite you to the ceremony (with its excellent opportunities for sharpshooters).

SR: The company says "Free Software" in its ad. Conservative fellows discover just one meaning, namely that this software can be used freely without having to pay a single dime. More enlightened people can grasp the other meaning too. The company wants to [tell] prospective buyers that the additional 10 MB will not cost them anything more than the computer itself without this software.

PE: Still more intelligent people can grasp the possible meaning of this: that a company is taking advantage of third parties in a way that is clearly prohibited by those third parties.

SR: Check mail order companies in the USA and see what they are doing. They even "force" commercial soft- and hardware on their clients for each machine sold (MS-DOS 4.01, *Windows*, Microsoft mouse, etc.). Microsoft is very active here! Authors of shareware are even more interested in getting known to computer users. They don't object to being uploaded on many BBSs.

PE: Absolutely true and absolutely irrelevant.

SR: About 5 years back I read an article about a software maker who was opposed to Borland's practice of selling popular software at rock-bottom prices. His opinion was that, if a company saves (let's say) $10,000 a year due to a particular software, 50% of the savings can well be justified as the fee for it. How do you like that?

PE: I disagree, but I see his point. I also think that if he charges $5,000 for his software, this is what its users should pay for it. If they think that's too high, they shouldn't use it—I'd think so, and I wouldn't use it.

SR: If the user is finally going to honor the request for payment is another matter and a gray zone. Anyway, if the program is good and the price is right, those software companies will survive. The fact that I don't agree with you or an insignificant minority doesn't make me a software pirate. Explain your mountains of shareware, Peter. All registered?

PE: Certainly not! I have [it] carefully .LZH'd away on indexed floppies. If I often find a program useful, [I] pay for it. Until I need to do this, it stays stashed away and unpaid for.

SR: About your samples of extracts from .DOC files. Simply boring! Sorry, they are for lawyers and you sort of guys. I don't read this stuff (except if I buy something), telling me every step in life. I can do without it. . . . Today's slogan: Lynch, hang, and shoot software violators and hand down 20 hours of community service for murderers and child molesters!

PE: My apologies for boring you. Appearances can deceive: I somehow got the impression that this issue excited you.

SR: Microsoft and all the other software makers who encourage or allow software bundling are very keen to become a household item like "Brillo". Sure, it helps the hardware vendor to have an edge over his competitors, but it helps the software companies to spread their name all over in the same proportion. Peter, who counts himself among the "more intelligent people", thinks that the hardware vendor is taking advantage of third parties in a way that is clearly prohibited by those third parties.

PE: Who, me? I said that "the possible meaning" was that the hardware vendor . . . etc., etc. If I implied that I considered myself intelligent, maybe I should take this back—after all, I've got to be dumb if I pay for things I could get without paying, haven't I?

SR: I am neither a hardware nor a software vendor,but a customer, and I would rather get these goodies (commercial software) than indulge in the pros and cons of legal contracts and documentations expressed by our sharp watchdogs. Concern over human rights violations in Tibet or at the Tiananmen Square is understandable; however, playing police in software and other matters is deplorable. I still believe what I previously said: MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!

PE: Raises an interesting ethical point, doesn't it? Isn't a person who says the capitalized formula thereby not minding *his* own business? Hmm. . . .

SR: We can do without such private sheriffs. I recall the grandfather in [Ueno] who had nothing better to do than to write down the license numbers of illegally parked cars (not even in the street where he lived), until the wrath of some car owners caused him a bloody nose. Occasionally I read messages on BBSs reminding people to register their shareware, stressing that it is "not free". I can read that myself in the .DOC file if I like, and don't need periodical reminders. Sorry for not displaying any remorse. Once I say something, I'll stick to it if I am convinced.

WB: Phrase of the day: "Sorry for not displaying any remorse." (freebooter, ca. 1991) Think I'll frame that and hang it on the wall of my office, right next to the statute of regulations for the THOUGHT POLICE.

PE: Correct me if I'm wrong, Sigi, but I start to infer that you actually don't subscribe to the concept of shareware at all.

Let's imagine a program for which the registered and shareware versions are all but identical, and which appears to need no support at all. Now, this program saves you [$20] every working week, and is itself priced at $20. Question: would you pay the $20?

But, it might be countered, this is none of my business.

Alas, it is, and I think it's the business of a lot of readers of this BBS. The non-anglophone areas of the world are notorious for the low number of shareware remittances. ("Aha!" it might be said, "you suckers who do pay up are in the minority!" This could be true, though I'd argue with the terminology.) [*What? Immediately after choosing it? Ed.*]

One company that's given up marketing its products here as shareware is Buttonware—one of the originators of the concept. This means that in Japan you cannot try any of their products before you buy, either (i) legally or (ii) easily. When I asked them the reasons for their policy, they said they'd found that outside North America, Australia, Britain, etc., trusting others to pay made much less commercial sense than working to force them to do so. Since Buttonware is successful and a big shot in the Association of Shareware Professionals, I imagine companies that market products both conventionally and as shareware—products such as *QEdit, Automenu,* and *4DOS*—are very interested in Buttonware's moves. Anyone who thinks that for other companies to follow Buttonware's lead wouldn't matter might think of the ease, speed and economy of upgrading by downloading a .ZIP file from a local BBS.

SR: Seems that all the angels are American, British, etc., encircled by crime-infested neighboring countries. Gosh, am I happy to be from a non-anglophone area living in another land of crooks. Wolfgang, apply for British nationality and decorate your office with my "freebooter" slogan. It's a real upgrade and I shall appreciate it. I have indeed registered a couple of shareware products, my major word processor, and several utilities. If I only occasionally use, for example, a shareware program to split files to fit on a 360kB disk, I don't feel obliged to register it. I simply do not believe that even the hard-core guys like Wolfgang and Peter would register ANY shareware which they might only use on every 29th of February!

PE: I can't speak for Wolfgang, but I certainly feel no [such] compulsion. However, virtually no shareware author expects it. As for the tiny minority who demand unconditionally that X days after your first use of their program you

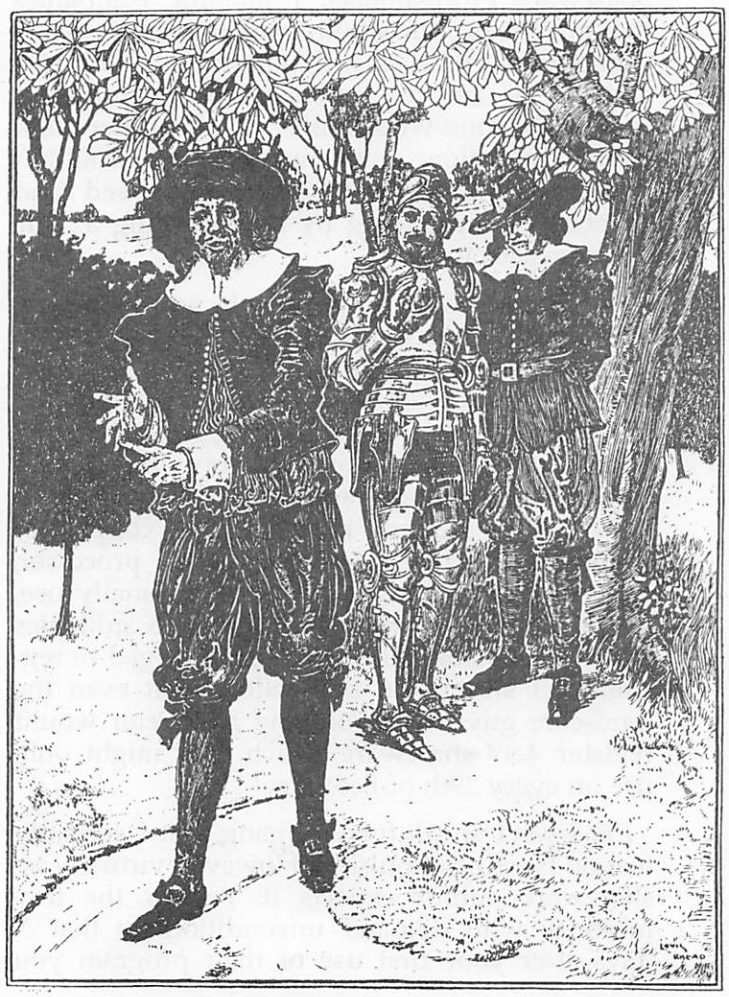
must either pay or delete, I tend to think their products probably somehow mirror their own monomania, and therefore delete them on day one without trying them once. There are exceptions; the point is that I read the small print and generally follow it. And I pay up because that's what the author asks for.

SR: I'm using a real freeware by Maynard Hogg, which enables me to convert *WordStar* to 100% accurate ASCII files. I use this program extensively, and I would be quite willing to pay for it if he asked.

PE: Sigurd, we do after all share tastes in software (good ones, of course). Maybe there's some other way to do the author a good turn. How about translating the [short] .DOC into German, adding it to the .ZIP, and pointing the result in the direction of Germany?

SR: Yeah, this idea of yours I like. I might translate [it].

Chris Case: Sigi, I can hardly remain silent when a prospective Article looms on the horizon. It could be made out of the discussion here, of the order of the *Laptop Forum* or *Ventura vs. PageMaker* discussions in the last issue, edited from messages on the BBS. To do so, I would imagine trying to distill the prose away from the purple end of the spectrum, and in the process get in focus what you guys really are saying, resisting of course the temptation to put in my own oar. The latter, were it lowered, would be to the effect that, given the law as it stands, Peter and Wolfgang are correct about the illegality of breaching it. The larger issue implied by the Hacker's Motto: "Data Wants to be Free" is not being intelligently addressed in this dialogue, if at all. Perhaps you could start from scratch, in the sense of forgetting about the TPC members on your case, and write a reasoned argument for your stance. I gather you have one when you're not saying "mind your own business" and the like, but that you don't like being challenged to justify it. That's fine, but if you are of the "free the info" school of thought, you will be compelled to challenge those in control at present, who equate agency rights with ownership. Most of what Peter and Wolfgang refer to is, I repeat, to do with legality. The tone of dialogue implies that ethical judgments are at stake, but nobody is really entering the ethical domain to deal with such questions as: "who SHOULD own ideas?" But if you agree that somebody DOES, and that copying ideas constitutes theft, and that theft should be illegal, and that illegal things are wrong, then you will have to admit that something's wrong there, if you get past all the IFs. Most of them are debatable, and the ethical high ground is up for grabs here; the prevailing laws are by no means self-evidently just, and indeed are arguably intellectually repressive and counter-productive. The legalistic white elephant of software copyright stands on the ethical mutant tortoise of intellectual property, which rests on . . . what indeed?



WB: Chris, it may have come out differently, but what I and probably Peter were driving at was not legality, but is indeed very much in the domain of ethics. If we disregard the issue of "normally marketed software" for a moment, the point is just that shareware is not based on any rigid legal structure, much less one that can be enforced in any way by

Continued on p. 19

Disk O' the Month

by Joseph Kaye, Disk Librarian

This month's **DOM** is not only the usual distribution point for software, but also a complement to the Newsletter. It contains four programs:

- *LHA V2.11 [English version]*
- *NameGram*
- *PC-Sort*
- *Search aNd Replace.*

Although I stated in last month's column that the April *DOM* would be *4DOS*, arrangements with the Association of Shareware Professionals are taking longer than expected. However, to make up for this, we've added various supplemental disks to the regular stock available at meetings. More about that later.

LHA is the upgrade to LHARC and LHICE. It can create ICE.EXE or LHARC.EXE extractable files, but "why bother?" LHA is faster, contains a built in SFX module, and achieves better compressions than LHARC, ICE, PKZIP, or even — gasp — ARC! LHA223_E is a self-extracting file; type the name and it will generate all the files necessary. To get at the other programs, go to the directory or drive in which you want to store the programs, and type LHA X A:filename. There is some rather good documentation included; very nice.

PC-Sort is a rather complicated sorting program well suited to the advanced user — see the documentation.

Search aNd Replace, SNR, is a great program that can go through a file and convert certain sets of characters to others. For instance, you could go through this file and replace every occurence of "THE", say, with "ZA". There are more serious uses — converting WP files, or upgrading source code.

NAMEGRAM is reviewed in (and used to create) this very issue. This is what I meant by the disk being a complement to the newsletter. If you like the idea, please tell me, or post on TPC — we like input now and then.

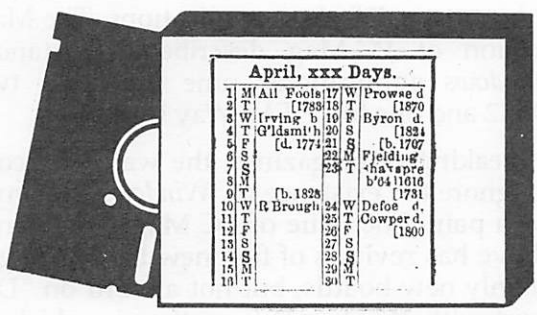
Finally, a note of thanks to Peter Evans. Peter was instrumental in recommending, obtaining, and sending the software on this disk. He spent quite some time and effort getting things ready, giving suggestions, and so on. So, Peter, thank you VERY much.

Additions to The Main Disk Library:

WordPerfect Utilities consists of a large ZIP file containing all of the utilities and accompanying documentation for *WordPerfect* I could dig up. It includes programs for 5.1, 5.0 and earlier versions. If you're a fan of *WordImperfect*, then this could be ¥500 well spent.

VGA/EGA games is self-explanatory. Some of the games require a mouse, although many of the best don't. It includes *Commander Keen*, a graphic arcade-style adventure game — "Possibly the best shareware game written", *JoustVGA*, *Shooting Gallery V2.0*, and a number of others. *JoustVGA* is an original. You are an ostrich, and you have to fly around, bumping other ostriches, making them lay eggs. Sounds kinky, and is good fun. *Shooting Gallery* requires a mouse, and is what its name suggests.

The other permanent disks are still around: *Telix*, *Archiving Tools*, and *Virus Removal*. As limited quantities are available, it is best to E-mail me prior to the meeting to be sure of getting one. But in any case, don't fail to try April's Disk O' the Month!



WINDOWS UPON WINDOWS

by Martin Bruczkowski

"Would you believe in a love at first sight?
Yes, I'm certain that it happens all the time..."
-Lennon/McCartney

Well, it happened twice to me. The first time was five years ago when I saw that lovely Japanese girl on a street in Warsaw — she is now my wife. The second was three years ago, when I installed *Windows 1.3* on my old AT — now I don't disgrace my hard disk with non-*Windows* applications. When, after dating Kazuko for two weeks, I told my parents I was going to Japan and was going to marry her, their reaction was predictable laughter. Well, he who laughs last...

My love affair with *Windows* produced even more laughs, which only started drying up with the release of *Windows 2.0*, and were reduced to embarrassed hiccoughs with the coming of the Mother of All Applications: *Windows 3.0*. These are the days of the final victory for us, the *Windows* prophets, who have been predicting the End Of DOS As We Know It since November 18, 1985 (the birthday of *Windows 1.0*).

Or are they? The PC Magazine chart of Top Ten Sellers in software shows *Windows* in third place; but only one *Windows* application is on the list — and it's in tenth place! Oh, well, converting to new religions is a slow and painful process... On the other hand,a majority of the programs in the "First Looks" and "New and Improved" columns are *Windows* applications. The March 12 edition of PC-Mag describes ten stand-alone *Windows* applications, nine for DOS, two for OS/2 and one for *GEM*. Way to go!

Speaking of magazines, the way they continue to ignore the existence of *Windows* fills my heart with pain. The issue of PC Magazine mentioned above has reviews of five new hardware gizmos, mainly new boards, but not a word on "Do they work with *Windows*?" If so, then in which modes (Real, Standard, 386 Enhanced)? Is a special driver needed? Do the programs that accompany them run in *Windows*? Such data should be included in the standard information supplied with every product, just like the type of CPU or amount of RAM necessary to run the software.

Ignoring *Windows* is not the only transgression of *PC Magazine* writers. At least half of all reviewers of *Windows* applications forget to check on DDE support. (DDE = Dynamic Data Exchange = the ability of some *Windows* applications to share data with each other). MEC's *WysiWord*, a new word processor/DTP program, is just one example.

The *Windows* Program Of The Month

Becker Tools! They do what many of us have wanted to do for ages — DISKCOPY high density floppies *in one pass*. Neither *Windows'* native File Manager nor other utilities like *PC Tools 6.0* can do that. *Becker Tools 2.0* from Abacus Software costs $130 list; for this you'll get your single-pass DISKCOPY, copying one disk to several targets (with or without format), data compression, undelete and many other tools. Highly recommended!

The *Windows* Tip of the Month

Irritated by the wait-state during printing? The fault lies mostly in *Windows* Print Manager. If you print without Print Manager, the wait may be shorter! The path to disabling the beast is: *Program Manager/Control Panel/Printers/Print Manager*. If you have a lot of memory, you can speed up printing *a lot* when using Print Manager, by spooling to a RAM disk such as VDISK or RAMDRIVE, which must be set up in extended memory, the only type of extra memory *Windows* open easily onto; it's best if you are prepared to devote 1 MB of your RAM for spooling and temporary files.

Happy Windowing!

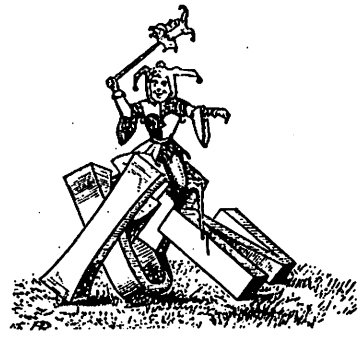
PLAYING AROUND WITH(OUT BREAKING) WINDOWS

By Ed Zawlocki

Let's face it: we all have to goof off from time to time. Especially after we've been looking at that CRT for hours on end. And don't *Solitaire* and *Othello*, that come with *Windows 3.0*, soon get boring? Well, Microsoft looked out of their big Window in the sky and saw our plight. They've released Microsoft *Entertainment Pack for Windows*, a US$30 product (approximate street price) which includes 7 games and a screen saver, the latter perhaps included so you could justify buying the package without being though totally frivolous.

Tetris is the well-known Russian import of falling blocks. It has provisions for 1 or 2 players as well as 10 start levels and up to 9 start rows.

TicTactics is the classic Tic-Tac-Toe game, with 3 variations. There are 3x3, 3x3x3, and 4x4x4 playing fields, and Beginner, Intermediate, and Expert levels. Can you beat the computer?



Taipei is another commercially available game, with some additions. The standard layout is supplemented by 6 others; a Bridge, a Castle, a Cube, a Glyph, a Pyramid, and a Spiral. The object is to remove all of the Mahjong tiles by selecting matching pairs from the piles. It's not as easy as it sounds or looks!

Pegged is a peg-removal game played on a cruciform field. The 7 variations (Cross, Plus, Fireplace, Up Arrow, Pyramid, Diamond, and Solitaire) place pegs on the field in a set pattern, and you have to remove them by jumping one peg over another. The object is to leave the least number of pegs.

Minesweeper is a logic game, the object of which is to figure out where all the mines are in a rectangular field. When you select a square you will see a blank, a number from 1 to 7, or a mine. A blank means there is no mine adjacent to that square, while the numbers indicate how many mines are immediately around it. If you uncover a mine, you've lost and the game is over. There are 3 pre-set fields; Beginner (8x8 with 10 mines), Intermediate (16x16 with 40 mines), and Expert (16x30 with 99 mines), as well as a custom field (up to 24x30 and 667 mines) A very easy, but quite addicting game. Unfortunately, the outcome often comes down to making a guess rather than making a logical choice.

Two solitaire games are included. *Cruel* (where they get the names for these I don't know) sets up the cards with the 4 aces at the top and 12 piles of cards below them. The object is to remove (or move) the cards from the piles and place them, in order, on the aces. When you can't move a card, you get to re-deal those remaining until you can't move anymore.

Golf consists of 7 stacks of 5 cards dealt out randomly at the top of the screen, allowing you to see all their values. The rest are in a pile at the bottom of the screen, where you take one at a time and try to use it to remove those above in sequence as in 8-9-10-jack-etc. or 5-6-5-4-5-6-etc. You've got one shot through the pile.

The screen saver, called *Idlewild*, can be set to protect your screen when you haven't been doing anything for some time. You have a choice of 8 ways to do so, and you can set the delay in minute increments. Once initiated, moving the mouse or pressing a key restores the original screen. *Blackness* just shuts off the screen, so you look at nothing. *Dancing Lines* places colored lines on the screen one at a time. *Fireworks* blanks the screen, then launches starbursts across the CRT. *Stars* makes a random star-pattern. *Wipe-out* does just what it sounds like and wipes the screen clean. *Drop-out* first creates a cross-hatch pattern, then the "blocks" fall out one by one. *Shuffle* is similar, except the "blocks" move around the screen. *Random* takes a completely random approach to screen blanking. If you want to play more games in your *Windows* environment, or if you'd like a nice screen-saver program, then this package is for you. But don't say I didn't warn you of its addictive power when you find yourself playing instead of working.

TPCeymour

Dvorcé

Flipside Trek

TPC Newsletter readers have a right to expect that their correspondents do something to earn the **inconceivable disbursements** and **startling perks** that lure so many of us to these **giddy heights**. Rumours of something big breaking on **the ethical front** had drawn me **south of the Alps** for a change, to **Rome**, where I expected to find an **imbroglio** as only the Italians can prepare it. I was not disappointed. And so, leaving my hosts graciously alone in the **Palazzo di Medici**, I make my way to a phone booth and send in to **the TPCity desk** the following **FLIPSIDE TREK** information:

[*Dateline : Rome, 1 April 1991.*] A railway porter may be the first to tell you: all hotel rooms are booked with **non-tipping Japanese** as negotiations get under way to avert the long-threatened **criminal** prosecution and civil lawsuit by the **Vatican** against "**Japan, Inc.**" Efforts to identify the board of directors of the well-known Far Eastern trading organization have proved largely **fruitless**, reports the team of 20 **Living National Outsiders** recruited in Tokyo by a consortium of anonymous trading companies to locate the **individuals responsible** for what one highly placed message tape at the Vatican has termed "just [about] the most flagrant example of this **sort of thing** since **God** knows when, that's all! And we should know." Sources add that it has not yet been officially determined who the spokesman was, nor what he was referring to, but this disclaimer is considered **a mere formula**.

"The most flagrant example of this sort of thing since God©™® knows when."
– The Vatican

As everyone in this city of **ancient ruins** and **superfluous sunglasses** knows, the offense with which the Vatican charges Japan is that of "copying the **look and feel** of Christmas". The **cardinals contend** that utilization of "the **Santa Claus™** interface" without distribution of "the main **Messiah** program" is a prerogative of the clergy. The Tokyo consensus is that the Vatican will **settle for a fraction** of its original demands, which include compensation for the loss of the User Support contracts that usually accompany so large an installed **base as Japan** represents. It is surmised by many here that, after settling out of court in the civil suit, **Japan** will plead **guilty** in the **criminal** courts, and ask for several lesser instances to be taken into account, citing **Valentine's Day, Easter,** and **Baseball** among the programs **in question.**

Others disagree, reporting rumours that Japan may provide the finance for an **Israeli initiative** against **the Vatican's parent organization**, in which it will be claimed that **The Trinity™**'s use of the **Ten Commandments** constitutes source code protection **violation**. In a tangential litigation, The Trinity is not expected to press for retroactive licensing fees for the "**3-In-1**" concept from the well-known lubricant manufacturer.

In the meantime, China is contemplating an action of its own **against Japan** in respect of its ideogrammatic icons; a **Cease and Desist** order is being sought, as well as a share of the proceeds of the most recent ten centuries of poetry, **propaganda**, and promissory notes. Seen as a potential ally, China is being actively **courted by the Vatican**, and offers have been faxed to fly in advisory teams of **Jesuit scholars** to help with what a spokesman termed "the reasoning."

More Action in the Legal Department Dept: word reaches me from **North of the Border** as I start to run out of these **fussy Italian phone cards** that, in the first lawsuit of its kind, the **Aryan Race**[Pat.Refused] has initiated a Class Action Suit against the authors of **Sanskrit**[q.v.], an early and relatively unstructured query language, for inconsistencies in basic algorithms resulting in **millennia** of **lost developmental time**.

Usually and unusually reliable sources alike predict that the case will follow the course of last year's consumer group charges that implementation of the **DNA programming code** in itself constituted **irresponsibility verging on bravado**, and that, **in the flurry** following initial successes, peripheral product development for the **Evolution© environment** led user support and after-service of the **DNA module** in particular into a **downward spiral**, resulting in massive unauthorised reproduction in the orient. In a **series of maneuvers** that have entered **legal and accounting history**, the **shadowy board of directors** of ***Evolution™*** won **absolution** from **responsibility on the well-tended grounds of their legal residence in Luxembourg.**

-CC

Ron Snider, ever in search of outlets for excess energy, finds in the back alleys of Akihabara a

BUXOM BREAKTHROUGH

Sonyo Electric Co. (Osaka)'s CADNICACA division, known for its rechargeable nickel cadmium cells and batteries, has recently announced the introduction (soon to be available to OEM makers of ni-cad battery operated equipment) of the new battery maintenance system *BUXOM* ("Battery Utilisation and Xhaustion Observance Module.) Described as a breakthrough in battery maintenance, *BUXOM* was designed by Sonyo and built by Nippon Steel & Light Metal Co. *BUXOM* takes a quantum step beyond the simple pop-up battery monitor program incorporated into some laptops, in terms of its approach to battery condition sensing, analyzing, and equalizing. *BUXOM* promises to expand the ability to help solve once and for all the sticky problem Sonyo's battery division refers to as "individual ni-cad cell goof-off syndrome" or INCCGOS...a problem that has plagued the makers of laptop computers and similar power-hungry portable devices.

Not yet fully documented, the *BUXOM* module is designed to be either included in equipment at the time of original manufacture, or incorporated into vinyl encased stand-alone BBDA (Bad Battery - Discipline Adapters) that may some day be as common as A/C adapters.

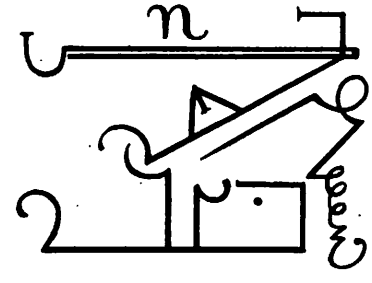
In practice the *BUXOM*'s OBCM (Overall Battery-condition Monitor) firmware will monitor the equipment's battery condition, keeping a sharp eye out for INCCGOS, and take whatever measures are necessary. Looking like a "black box" the size of a disposable lighter, and weighing 43 grams, the *BUXOM* is said to consist of: the OBCM firmware, an activity-monitor, a logic circuit, 1 megabyte of RAM, a DC-DC converter, a ceramic-encased power-absorbing/equalizing section, a small heater with sealed boiler holding 5 grams of water, a solid brass alarm system, an optional number of cell-condition sensors, and an optional NTSC screen-driver capable of utilizing the glut of superannuated parts for the power-hungry early-model color LCD TV screens.

In operation the cell sensors will feed the voltage-out data of the individual cells to the logic section. If deemed necessary, the logic empowered by the OBCM firmware will go into RHEM (Robin Hood Emulation Mode) which will (during periods of battery inactivity), divert power by means of the DC-DC converter from the "have" to the "have-not" cells in an attempt to keep the overall battery balance. When the battery charge gets too low for this balancing act to continue, and the activity monitor determines it is safe to do so, the BCSAAM will switch into DDM (Deep-Discharge Mode), during which the logic section will dump the remaining charge into the power-absorbing section. In briefly marketed earlier versions, this consisted of some form of wire-wound resistor, or even a series of primitive knife switches and black-painted miniature light bulbs. Now, however, with the advent of the optional NTSC driver and color LCD screen, this power can be used to generate a colorful graphical display of the exploits of the Robin Hood Emulation as saved to memory. No mere bar-graph program, the DDM's program generates a dizzying array of fractally derived bar and pie graphs that diminish in size and, ultimately, in intensity, as the battery runs down and the DC-DC converter craps out.

The OBCM and logic section will try to do their RHEM and DDM during periods of inactivity. Should that inactive period not occur, at a certain point which the OBCM judges optimal, or at least not embarrassing, it starts dumping the remaining power of the "haves" into the boiler's heater, which utilises state-of-the-art miniature train technology to activate a penetrating alarm.

Future models may replace the boiler with a "music-on-a-chip" circuit capable of playing digitized versions of "Taps", "Auld Lang Syne", or "The Long and Winding Road" as an alternative to the steam whistles. This would have the further advantage of not requiring you to dispose of the unit once the water is exhausted, and research and design is therefore deemed unlikely to be completed in this decade or at least until the lyrics' copyrights expire.

-RBS



ADVENTURES IN HYPERTEXT

Martin Bruczkowski Lets Himself Be Led by Owl International's *Guide*

"When I get to the bottom
I go back to the top of the slide,
Where I stop and I turn and I go... "
Lennon/McCartney

How many types of PC applications reside on your hard disk? Perhaps a spreadsheet, a word processor, a database manager, a graphics program, a game or two, and a bunch of utilities? It's funny how few of our hardware's abilities we are tapping with our software. In search of brave new ways to utilize the mass of iron sitting on my desk, I recently had a look at a still rarely used category of software—a hypertext application. Thanks to the kindness of Owl International, Inc., a review copy of *Guide* , their hypertext software, arrived at my door in a big heavy box. Neglecting my wife's cries that the dinner was getting cold, I ran to my machine, opened the box, and...

Before I start my tale of navigating the rough seas of *Guide*, I would like to ponder for a moment a rather basic question: What is hypertext? The term was coined by Ted Nelson in 1965, who proposed using computers to link related chunks of text, thus creating a kind of "nonlinear writing". Hypertext was later called "a relational database with a particularly friendly user interface", "an array of text fragments linked together", or a "network of nodes containing text, audio, video, connected by links". All of which is undoubtedly true, but doesn't give much idea of what it is. But you have probably already experienced something very akin to it, however primitively: the Help system of your favourite application. Typically, {F1} opens a window with a selection of topics. Several keywords are bold or underlined, and if you select one of these, it will take you to another menu or to a screen of information wherein you may find further highlighted keywords, some of which you may have seen on the way there; within this help system you may circle around and cover many topics without constantly returning to the overmenu and following a different branch.

Published by *Windows* as one of its first major *Windows* applications, *Guide* was the first hypertext program marketed for the PC. The current version of *Guide* is *3.0*; it has been designed to work with *Windows 3.0*, but will also run under *Windows 2.Xx*; hardware and software requirements are those of *Windows*. It uses 1.420MB of hard disk space and is happiest with 2–4 MB of RAM (though Owl modestly recommends a mere 1 MB).

Within the imposingly large "IBM-standard" cardboard box with the obligatory three–ring binder, there are surprisingly few floppy disks: three 3.5" 2DD and two 5.25" 2HD. Following a recent trend among software publishers, a run-time version of *Windows* with all its drivers is *not* included, so users of any *Windows* program will benefit enormously from having a copy of *Windows* installed on their system; besides, it makes the package smaller and cheaper.

The largest part of the documentation is the 125-page "*Guide* User Manual". A couple of errors and an incomplete index aside, it is more than adequate. If you follow the exercises, you will learn your way around the program within an afternoon. Installation is horrible (unlike the program itself). While most modern *Windows* applications can be installed from within *Windows*, here you have to drop to DOS and run a batch file—and a particularly dumb and buggy one at that. Fortunately, manual installation is also described; it actually proved to be easier, as *Guide*

is made of a bunch of files with no subdirectories. However, you have to add a few lines to WIN. INI, a text file in the *Windows* subdirectory. Alas, this is not the only time when a thorough knowledge of the *Windows* environment comes in handy. Generally, the first steps in *Guide* are easy if you know how to use *Windows*, and hard if you don't.

Working with a hypertext document created in *Guide* is similar to using the Help provided with *Excel, Word for Windows*, or *Windows* 3. 0 itself. You browse through text marked with word-buttons, which take you to other chunks of text when you click on them. *Guide*, however, offers more types of buttons than most ordinary help systems. Here's what they are and what they do:

1. ***Reference buttons*** take the user to another part of the document, or another document.

2. ***Expansion buttons*** are words that expand into text to provide more information. Expanded text can be then collapsed to show only the word-button.

3. ***Note buttons*** display a pop-up window as long as you keep depressing the mouse button.

4. ***Command buttons*** pass instructions to executable files called interpreters. Interpreters can perform a variety of functions, e.g. launch other applications or control your hardware. Reference and Note buttons can be found in almost all hypertext applications. Expansion buttons, however, are a very convenient novelty. They display additional information without leaving the page you are reading. They are also the easiest buttons to create. Command buttons are the most powerful feature of *Guide*. They are a window to the outside world, earning *Guide* the grand title of "Hypermedia Application". The User Manual states that "Some interpreters come with *Guide*." In fact, I found only two: OPCL3. EXE, which can launch and close other programs, and SERIAL3. EXE, which controls devices connected to your serial port. Other interpreters can be written using the *Windows* Software Developers' Kit—hardly a solution for the average user. Still, the two interpreters supplied with *Guide* can do pretty impressive things—from creating a complete menuing system for *Windows* to designing a telephone dialer. Owl even suggests controlling your audio and video, which I'll rush to do as soon as my CD player sprouts a serial port. How does one know which words are the buttons, when looking at a page of text? You can tell by the shape of the pointer passing over a word, and by the style of text—the buttons could be bold, italic, or of a different size or color. *Guide* offers default styles for the four types of buttons and pointer shapes (see the top left corners of figs. 1–4), which you can easily change. This ease can be dangerous. If you assign the same style to a button as to the rest of the text, nobody will see it; if you assign an incorrect pointer shape to a button, you are inviting the most common form of hypertext confusion—getting lost. .20. . But designing a good hypertext is an art in itself, and, just as learning how to use a spreadsheet won't make you an accountant, you'll need something more than proficiency in *Guide* if you want to create a document that's easy to navigate and whose contents are easy to digest. Owl does a pretty good job of showing how hypertext documents should be written, in the series of samples supplied with the package.

The Command buttons are demonstrated in one of the samples included with *Guide*—an Application Launcher. This uses *Windows* icons for Clock, Calendar, and the like. The Command buttons act with impressive speed—there is no visible difference between starting an application from *Windows* Program Manager and doing so with a *Guide* button. The integration of text- and application-launching buttons is not actually shown in the *Guide* samples, although I see it as the most interesting feature of this software.

The long and winding road through a jungle of buttons, windows and icons to the data you're after can be quite exasperating if all you need is a particular piece of information. *Guide*'s advanced search ability then comes to the rescue: it's liberally equipped with features (such as an option-laden Find/Replace command) that should make many word processors pale with envy. In addition to searching the current document, you can search all linked files, or a random selection of files on your hard disk.

The searches are passably fast—searching through the *Guide* subdirectory, containing 92020kB in 23 documents, for my name AND surname (which I added to the last file) OR my middle name (not found) took 19.3 seconds. That's fast enough for use with *Guide* samples; however, searching my 18020MB disk would take one and a half hours. Although the manual doesn't say so, searches of non-*Guide* documents are impossible—the software attempts to find the string, but falsely reports no matches. Speaking of speed, I'd like to give you a general idea of how fast *Guide* is. Here are some simple benchmarks, conducted on my 386 desktop, running at 2520MHz, with 820MB RAM:

Launch *Guide* from *Windows*:5.5sec.

Load a *Guide* document (20020kB): 1.5sec.

Jump from the top to the bottom of text: (20020kB): 4.3sec.

Jump from the bottom to the top of text (20020kB): 0.4sec.

Redraw graphics (map of Japan): 1.9sec.

Import an ASCII document (20020kB): 5min.3sec. (Sic!)

Importing a large text file is an excellent test of your patience. Luckily, you are not likely to do it often; otherwise, *Guide* is about as fast as *Word for Windows* (see the April 1990 newsletter), which means fast for a *Windows* application. The only time when it is annoyingly sluggish is while displaying a bitmap image.

Sooner or later you'll need help. Reach for that king of function buttons, {F1}, and the help system pops up. It's only after you have had a good look at it that the disappointment starts. First, it is buggy beyond any usefulness—after you arrive at the second or third screen, you are greeted by a blank window. Since some fiddling will reveal the text boundaries, it appears that there *is* something—unfortunately in white on white.

Secondly, Help (or what can be seen of it) is not context-sensitive, unlike the help systems in many simpler and cheaper applications; why Owl couldn't provide this in their flagship product is beyond my comprehension. If you want an example, try the el cheapo spreadsheet *Lucid 3-D*. Although there couldn't be a better example of *Guide* in action than a help system, I have mixed feelings about the fact that, instead of using the Help utility provided with *Windows*, which would have been a substantial convenience for those used to *Windows*, Owl has completely disregarded *Windows* 3.0 conventions, and supplies Help written in *Guide*!

Elsewhere, *Guide* remains rather faithful to *Windows* conventions. The first look at *Guide* shows a typical *Windows* screen. Familiar menus are where you expect them to be. *Guide* documents are opened as "child" windows—a convention adopted with the release of *Windows* 3.0. To an experienced *Windows* user, *Guide*'s look and feel will be familiar enough. Only a few little points differ from *Windows* conventions—mainly selecting text. In using MIWindows Write or *Word for Windows*, one gets used to clicking at the left edge of the screen to select a line, or CTRL-clicking, which selects a sentence; in *Guide* you have to use the old-fashioned combination of clicking and dragging.

Working with *Guide* can be divided into two discrete processes, in real life usually performed by different people: building a hypertext document, and using it to retrieve data. In this way *Guide* is more like a database manager than a word processor, and just as the former is primarily used to build applications that can later be compiled for use by somebody else, buying *Guide* makes sense if you plan to create hypertext documents. For retrieving data from such documents, a cheaper and simpler software package should and does exist—it is called the *Guide* Reader. I will try to obtain a copy of the Reader for a short follow-up review next month; for now, let us look at its big brother as a hypertext designing package.

At the beginning and the end of the hypertext designing process is the text—hence its resemblance to a word processor. *Guide* offers most features of a typical word processor, which

makes it far less intimidating than other hypertext packages. A new document opens as a blank page ready for typing, with a ruler for setting the tab stops; the menus offer the usual options.

Next, you'll look in vain for indentation, text alignment, a spelling checker... In fact, a *Guide* user is in the same boat as a DTP software owner—having to spend another few hundred dollars for a full-featured word processor. DTP software publishers have started to address this complaint; the latest *PageMaker* comes with word-processor-like "story editor"); might we not expect to see at least a decent spelling checker in *Guide* 4. 0, such as even *PC Tools* — not primarily a word processor —now provides? To make matters worse, *Guide* accepts text only in plain ASCII and RTF formats!

All this criticism notwithstanding, the word-processor metaphor can help you enormously to understand and use *Guide.* There is also one feature which shines out—the Glossary. You can put any amount of frequently used text in the Glossary and insert it at any time. Better still, you can place *Guide* objects there: buttons that perform certain actions. With Glossary it becomes very simple to add a "Backtrack", "Index" or "Close" button at the bottom of every page of your document —an Ariadne's Thread to guarantee a safe return from the labyrinth of data. The ease of placing such commands on every page can help the hypertext designer to create an easy-to-navigate document. On the minus side, there should be a keyboard shortcut for quickly inserting Glossary items. Going through the menus to insert an item sometimes takes longer than just typing it.

Guide can use not only existing text files, but also pictures. Graphic files can be imported in TIFF (mono only), PCX, BMP, MS Paint, and *Windows* Metafile formats. The *Windows* clipboard can be used to paste graphics files from most *Windows* applications, effectively enlarging this list. However, many popular file formats, especially vector-based graphics, are not supported, e.g. Encapsulated PostScript, PIC, and CDR (*Corel Draw*).

A very nice feature of *Guide* is the choice between integrating graphics into the document and leaving them as external files linked to the document and accessed when needed. Several simple transformations can be performed on graphic images—they can be re-sized, moved, overlaid, dragged to the front or back. No drawing tools are included with *Guide,* but since the *Windows Paintbrush* should be sufficient for creating images, I'm not going to complain too loud.

After importing the text and pictures, a hypertext designer starts creating links in the form of words-buttons. The process is not too difficult to master, although Owl's programmers should have wielded Occam's razor to halve the number of steps necessary to create a button. Still, it is learnable, to the point where after two days with *Guide* , I could quickly create any type of button, linking different parts of text and separate files. To help in creating hypertext links, several of the *Guide* samples can be used as templates. Editing the existing documents is a snap, thanks to the "Freeze" command, which deactivates all links and lets you edit the contents of buttons or note windows.

Guide would benefit greatly from a few tools to automate some tasks, such as a simple macro recorder and the ability to search the hard disk and automatically link to specific data.

Do I have any need for hypertext? The answer came quite accidentally. I remembered once trying to learn all the options of *PKzip*—a file compression program. The manual included with this shareware product is over 70 pages long! I gave up at that time, but placing the monster document file in *Guide* took less than a minute. Then I had another idea—I'd try to create a usable hypertext document in less time than it would take to print and read the whole file. My race with time was won by a narrow margin. I admit I didn't do much—merely created a couple of buttons on the first page (in the review section), then collapsed several paragraphs into buttons showing only their titles. Now I had a page of general description, where some keywords became buttons, taking the reader to the appropriate paragraphs, the body of text in the form of a "menu"—with only titles shown, expanding at a click into whole paragraphs. What started as play turned out to be quite useful—after using *PKzip* for two years I knew 90 percent of its features. All I had to do was to fish out the unknown ones; the clear form of my *Guided* manual let me see them at once. So am I recommending that my gentle readers go out and get a copy of *Guide* to organize shareware manuals? Hardly—especially in view of the steep price. As I wrote before, the typical use of hypertext is a two-step process, where one person creates a document and several others read it. This sounds like a company scenario, and that's where *Guide* should really feel at home. Training systems, educational materials, library

Continued on p. 26

The Awk Squawks

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Wm. Auckerman reviews 4 Fantastic Programs

➢ WHERE IN THE WORLD IS MY KEYCHAIN?

Are you forgetful? Always losing things? *WITWIMK*, patterned after the popular *Where in the World is Carmen San Diego* detective game, will help you track down your missing items. To set up *WITWIMK*, enter detailed information about all of your possessions into the proprietary database, create a layout of your house and furnishings, using the special graphics package, and enter your typical daily schedule in the calendar. The next time you lose something, ask *WITWIMK* for clues as to its whereabouts. *WITWIMK* will even print out a list of the 20 most likely places that it might be, in reverse order of probability. (After all, don't you usually find lost articles in the last place you look?) *WITWIMK* also contains an AI utility that keeps a record of what you've lost over the past six months, and where you found it. Once a pattern has been established, *WITWIMK* can actually warn you when you're about to lose something, so that you can take extra precautions. As an added bonus, *WITWIMK* will print your daily horoscope and recommend winning lottery numbers. This is a program you can't afford to be without. ***Where In The World Is My Keychain?:*** $49.99(plus 10% of your winning lottery tickets)

➢ *PATTON*

This general productivity program is for managers who want to take command of their staff and emerge victorious on the corporate battlefield. *PATTON* is a TSR (Tactical-Strategic Reprimand) that inspects employee performance; if its surveillance finds evidence of goldbricking, *PATTON* charges to the kernel of the problem. When the advance of productivity falters, *PATTON* automatically delivers a spirited pep talk as Old Glory fills the screen. Morale is certain to skyrocket as employees are encouraged by such advice as "Never take counsel of your peers.", "All real employees love the sting of paperwork," and "Well, ain't this better than shoveling spreadsheets in Louisiana?" Special hardware options include a set of pearl-handled pincers that install under the monitor and a genuine WWII-vintage army boot that nestles camouflaged under the chair. If *PATTON* detects that an employee is slacking off, it convincingly "grabs 'em by the nose and kicks 'em in the ass."

PATTON: $19.45

➢ *S.P.L.A.T.*

You say you give "C" an "F"? That BASIC is instructive, but strictly for beginners? That PASCAL makes about as much sense as 17th-century French philosophy? That AWK just doesn't fly? That APL is rotten to the core? Then why not write your own programming language to suit your specialized needs? *S*treamlined *P*rogramming *L*anguage *A*ssembly *T*ool (***SPLAT***) allows you to construct your own grammar (in any "human" language), determine your own syntax, define your own program structure, and select either compiled or interpreted. In just minutes, *SPLAT* converts your preferences into a programming language customized to match your individual requirements. Sound great? Well, that's not all. ***SPLAT, T**he **E**nhanced **R**esource* (***SPLATTER***) offers a number of added features. You can design a programming language customized for operation on your individual combination of hardware, or one that is generic for any DOS machine. And *SPLATTER* will even write an easy-to-read manual explaining how to use your new programming language (in case you forget a command or decide to market your creation). **SPLAT!** Now you too can be a computer programmer

SPLAT: $459.95; SPLATTER: $599.54

➢ *AUTHOR'S CHOICE*

Not just another style checker — *Author's Choice* is a style changer. No longer need your writing be dull and uninspired. *Author's Choice* can transform your moribund manuscript into a literary lodestar. Simply select the style from *AC*'s patented push-up menu, set the options (audience education level, average sentence length, American/British grammar and spelling, and much more), and type. When you're done, select the output style (see examples below) and *Author's Choice* automatically converts your vapid verbiage into real quality stuff. For

The Awk Squawks

Continued from previous page

example, if you type: "It rains in the Spanish flatlands.", sample *Author's Choice* outputs include:

High-society: "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain." Scholarly: "The precipitation in the Kingdom of Spain is restricted primarily to the interior llanos." Hyperbole: "The vast expanses of Iberian prairies are frequently subjected to inordinate deluges of near-Biblical proportions." Geological: "The alluvial plains of the western Mediterranean geophysical subdivision were formed under a moist, subtropical climate." Biological: "The Spanish lowlands represent especially good habitat for ducks and other waterfowl." Modern: "Well, like, you know, Spain's kinda, you know, wet, especially like, uh, the countryside, if ya know what I mean." Best Seller: "It was a dark and stormy night. Miguel stood alone in the vast plateau, shivering under the thin protection of a wet poncho, as the raindrops slowly dripped from his tear-stained face."

Special bonus: *Author's Choice* version 2.13 offers a special "Pastiche Package" as part of its Best Seller module. Now you can imitate the style of your favorite author. Choose from traditional (Hemingway, Steinbeck), modern (Updike, Mailer), humorous (Bombeck), or genre (King, Asimov). Coming soon: *Poet's Preference* and *Scriptwriter's Selection.*

Author's Choice: $39.95 hardcover, $8.95 paperback

-WA

Shareware

Continued from p. 8

the powers that be. After all, the "software police" is only a figment of Sigi's imagination, slightly amplified and bounced around by the fictional policemen themselves.

At least that is the way I see it. If one downloads a shareware program from a BBS, or buys a computer which has it already loaded on its hard disk, and likes the program and uses it extensively day in and day out, but doesn't pay the author a single cent, I don't think one is breaking any laws. The only thing one is violating is an admittedly very hazy concept of give and take, or rather take and give, and in the long run also sacrificing the opportunity to continue this practice of "take only", since there will be fewer and fewer people willing to write software and place it in such wobbly distribution channels (witness the Buttonware example).

But I am not sounding the trumpets of doom here. I have the impression that shareware, although certainly not the ideal get rich quick scheme, is not going to go away next month or next year, a number of Sigis worldwide notwithstanding. shareware has its roots in the idea that the distribution of data, computer code, and ideas should *not* be rigidly controlled by copyright laws and lawyers, but rather based on a mature and sometimes playful (witness quite a few shareware doc files) way of dealing with each other on an equal footing. Many shareware authors are at least as hungry for feedback from users as they are for their dollars or rubles. What grates on me is people who have no grasp of this concept scrawling "freedom" all over their threadbare banners.

Next Month: ***The Return of Sigi***

"ANAGRAM PROGRAM FRAMED ME!" DECLARES DETAINED DON IN COMPUTER CLUB BROUHAHA

PETER EVANS, an authenticated *E.S.P. Veteran* and surrogate *Eve's Parent*, was arrested on arrival at last month's meeting by the TPC Security Guard and charged with running the TPC Executive Minutes through what the Guard referred to as a "scrbalmer". In his defense the notorious atheist known as *Nave Pester* blamed the *PsL (Public Software Library)* for sending him the anagram program *NAMEGRAM* on his monthly disk of Shareware. "It showed me what it's all about!" he shrieked huskily as he was dragged from the church basement still declaiming (in what one reporter referred to as *peeve rants*) such imperatives as: *"Repent, Save!"*, *"Repave nest!"*, and *"Avert pense— never paste nerve tapes!"*, the last apparently a few words of caution to his successors at the editing desk of the Newsletter. The tall, brunet, former toddler was dressed in *severe pants* as he asked for 27 previous instances of Flemish Old Master forgery under the nom d'aplomb of *Apt Veneers*, to be taken into account.

DAVID BERNAT, minimalist shehnai player for the *Vibrant Dead*, and known to ethno-hip-hop aficionados as *Vedanta Bird*, referred to the defendant's arrival on the scene a few years ago as "the *rabid advent* of a *deviant bard.*"

Former President **WOODY HODGSON** hailed the departing miscreant with the jaunty salute, *"Howdy, DOS goon!"*

The arresting officer, **MAYNARD HOGG**, stigmatized the entire membership as a *"hangdog army"*, and denied any further interest in playing *hogyard G-man* to such an assemblage.

ANDREAS BRAEM, the club's kindly *Armband Easer*, calling the incident "a *mere saraband*", warned the club against *renamed arabs* and suggested that future vendor presentations should feature *barer maenads*.

SUSAN WINSKI, whose new book on nasal flirtation, *"A Sinus Winks"*, explained Prof. *Steep Raven's* deconstructionist actions by reminding the membership that *"sins win auks"*.

WILLIAM AUCKERMAN, author of such wide-eyed travelogues as *"A Crummie Walk in L.A."* and *"Miami Lawn Caulker"*, spoke of a *luminal karmic awe* that overcame him in the presence of *warlike MAC alumni. In a lukewarm claim*, he was heard to whisper *"I will make arcanum* to prove that the *CIA will unmake RAM*, given half a chance."

KATSUYA UCHIDA commented on what *acuity auks had*, quoting a *saucy DAT haiku* the latter had written for an NEC advertisement.

LARRY CISAR, listening surreptitiously from behind the *lyric arras*, was heard to mutter cryptically, "When in Rome, *carry liras.*"

ROGER BOISVERT, *big store rover* for a major market research company, proposed a new motto for club members: *"Serve Big or Rot!!"*

CHRISTOPHER CASE suggested that the BBS was "in danger of becoming an *aphorist's creche* for *cheap choristers* on *actorish perches* with *sharecrop ethics* who hurl *herpes trochaics* in *ricochet phrases* from *starchier epochs* where *ostriches preached scorch therapies* by the flickering light of *aspheric torches*," but nobody paid him any mind.

ANNE COLVILLE was overheard declining to *call neon evil*, while recalling that she first decided to *leave Lincoln* Center for Tokyo when she found that *no venal celli* could *enliven local clan ion levels*.

CHARLES IRELAND, in Japan on an assignment regarded as an *Achilles errand* comparable to visiting a girls' school as an *arachnid seller*, displayed some of his EC imports. *Lilac hardeners, calendar relish, éclair handlers, shellac drainer, reclad inhalers, Hellenic radars*, and *a children laser* were among the esoterica in his *eldrich arsenal*.. There was thinly veiled scepticism as he hotly denied being the *serial chandler* currently baffling ship stewards in the Kobe dockyards.

EDWARD ZAWLOCKI, reputed to be something of *a wedlock wizard*, commenced to *yak*

and nag, calling **DAN KANAGY** *a dang Yank*, until distracted by **IAN ARBUCKLE**, whose recently established *auricle bank* in Zagreb has earned him a reputation amid the *alien buckra* as the *Balkan Curie* of our time.

JAMES DOUGLAS TRAILL, on one of his *steroidal mulla jags*, claimed he expected a *major duellists gala* among *legal judo alarmists* at an upcoming meeting. Impatient as usual, he declared "*Major lassitude gall*s me, but one thing fuzzy oriental 'logic' has shown me is that *gradual Taoism jells*, even if not immediately."

MIKE GRAY arrived late, having just flown back from Tibet as tail gunner on Dan Rather's LearJet, still covered in *yak grime*, and averred that what the Club needs in a newsletter in this *mirky age* is religious uplift, and suggested conversion of the publication to what he called "a *Kyrie mag*."

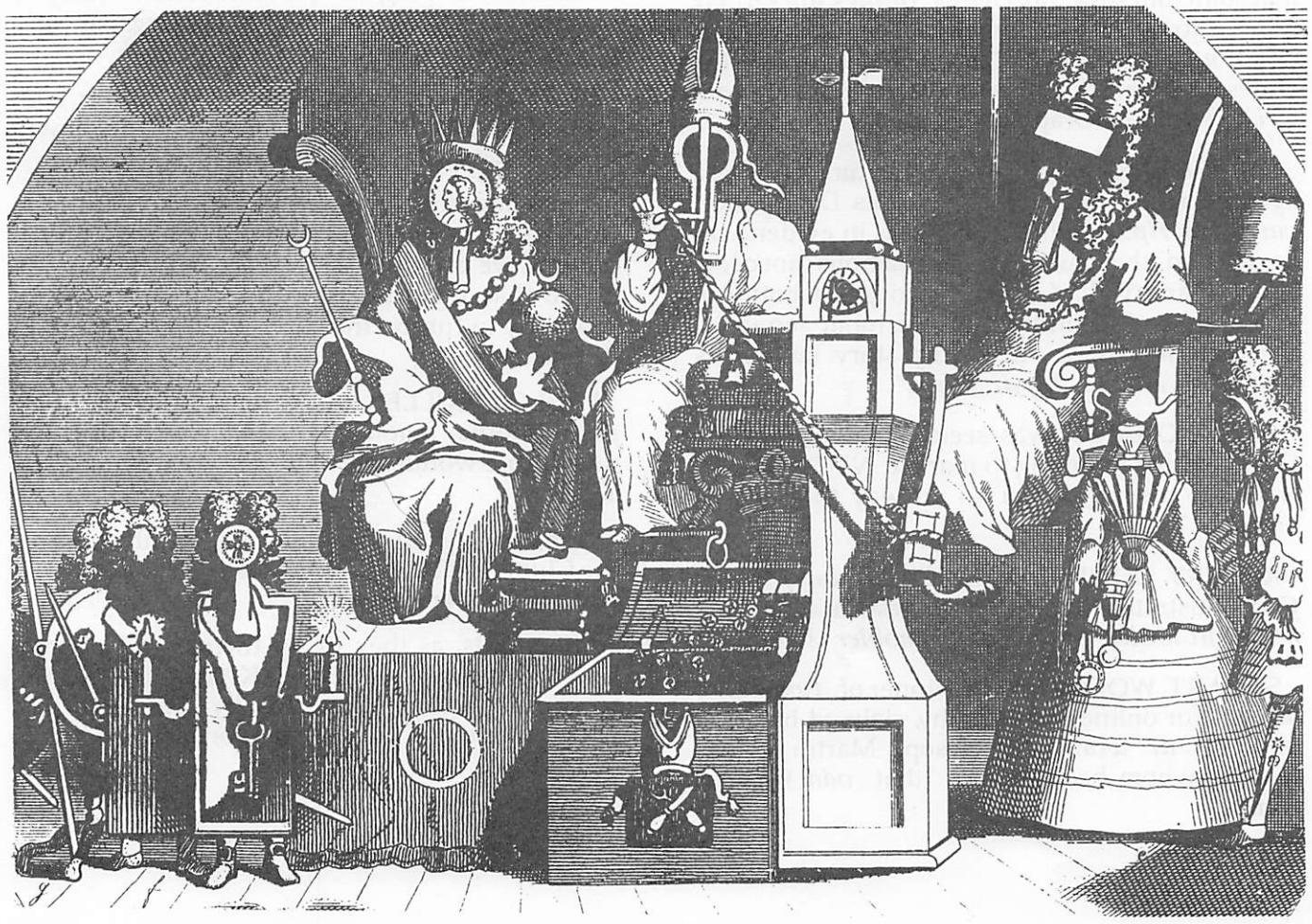
MARY JANE LIDDICOAT, recently returned with tales of a *major antacid yield* from a week-long *jam and erotica idyl*, claimed that "rather than be an *adroitly manic déjà* vu experience", the Newsletter should be a place for *radiant medical joy* and *jaded Inca morality* to *adjoin mad literacy*. "There's no room for timidity," she intimated, querying ironically, "Or *did Calamity Jane dread tiny majolica*?"

When **NOBUHIKO YOSHIMOTO** suggested photo coverage of the *Ohio youths' skin boom*, **PAUL CIPYNWYK** declared he was not interested in seeing the kinds of graphics to be found in any *inky YWCA pulp* fantasy mag, but **CARL HOFFMAN** said it was likely to be just *normal chaff* without so much as the *charm of flan*.

JOSE APARICIO VERDOY, describing himself as "*jocose, airy, overpaid*", claimed that what was generally needed was more *Joyce prose via radio*, subject of course to a *Cairo deejay proviso*. Pronouncing *Joyce "a period savior"*, he cautioned that it would be insufficient merely to *recopy a jived arioso*, and that writers should *praise or avoid Joyce*.

MELINDA HULL offered a two-column description of her recent visit to a Muslim Spice & Karaoke bar, seemingly a *Mullah-lined maudlin hell* where *men haul dill*."

RICHARD MAY held that the Newsletter should act as a sort of *Dharmic ray* of enlightenment, and produced a draft of a *hard icy RAM* article for the next issue.



MASAKO ISHIHARA offered a transcription of some of the best *Omaha Sikh arias* that she had ever learned from an *Osaka Maharishi.*

Some expected **PETE PERKINS,** possessor of one of the *perkiest pens* around, to *ink terse pep* talks to the membership.

KEITH WILKINSON, justly celebrated for both his *silent kiwi honk* and the *kinkiest howl in* town, arrived in his *hewn oilskin kit, with silken ikon* optionally attached,

MARTIN DAVIDSON, a lifelong student of what *variant minds do,* appeared to be in an *odd nirvana mist* as he outlined a plan to import *vans into Madrid,* while reading aloud from his recent article, "The Role of the *Divan in Stardom*".

NORMAN HAVENS was seen recruiting for his new religion, based on what he called "The Provisional Thesis", that the Godhead, while neither *Man nor shaven,* is immanent "in and through, of and for, by, with, and as the lowest level of the food chain." He asked to be addressed "henceforth" as *Rev. Manna Nosh.*

SIGURD RINDLER entered, muttering "*Durn IRS girl*!" When asked to explain, he insisted that sometimes the Tax Dept's *rulings did err.* He refused to discuss the dispute over his infamous "*rigid nerd" slur* on the TFA BBS, dismissing the aforesaid as a "*lurid nerds' rig*" which only *did girl reruns* in its Graphics Room.

DAVID PARRY took the opportunity offered by a bemused lull to articulate his DTP policy: *vary, add, rip.* A lighter touch was in evidence as he regaled the club with his famous anecdote about Maria Callas' attempts to get a bottle of champagne after midnight from room service at the Paris Metropole, a worthy story known by his friends as "the *dry diva rap.*"

ANNIE CHANG was seen explaining to Bob Connelly that planning to market *NEC in Ghana* was "like *caning a hen* — no way to make an omelette."

ROBERT CONNELLY, the Club's *only reborn Celt,* illustrated her point by gesticulating with *no recent brolly,* advising "*Try nobler clones.*"

STUART WOODWARD, winner of *two Tudor awards* for online orthography, claimed he could *outdraw at words* the sysop, Martin Bruczkowski, whom he vilified as "that *odd Warsaw trout*".

At mention of the "beloved sysop", *PATRICK HOCHNER,* notorious *hip chant rocker* and *porn chick hater* (of whom it has never been asked "*panther or chick*?") spoke of how Martin's wife, a concert pianist, had dubbed him "*Thick Herr Capon*" and "*the Orphic Crank*" for erasing *her Chopin track* from the BBS backup tape, which he claimed was the result of the *cthonic parker* on his hard disk.

Not displaying his usual reticence, **MARTIN BRUCZKOWSKI** himself now rose to the floor. "If you think I'm going to continue this *czarist bumkin work* on the BBS, filtering out the *nazi brickwork smut* while the hardware zaps perfectly good mazurkas, you can think again, preferably not online."

WOLFGANG BECHSTEIN quickly *blew chastening fog* upon the situation with the remark "*Clowning gabfest, eh?*" He cited the apocryphal Chinese quatrain:

"*Blowfish can net egg*
when *batching genes flow*
but if *twig befogs channel*
botching gleans few."

A peculiar plunking sound issued from within his waistcoat. "Just my *FEN switchable gong,*" he blurted, leaping towards the stairs. "Sorry to have to leave this *web of tech anglings* so early —I'm *fetching bagels now*!"

HEINZ ITO interrupted the irrelevancies with a pointed query as to the availability in downtown Tokyo of the *Zenith I/O.*

Seconding the apparent motion to return to functional reality, **TONY WHITMAN** pointed out that we could have *wit any month,* but predicted that, if membership dues are not paid up promptly in future, the Club *won't hit many* of its fiscal targets.

PABLO MULLER, designer of the *all-burl poem* popular among *real pub molls,* said the near future would see *mob rule pall,* even in the TPC.

Commenting on the optimum membership of the Club, **ARTURO PEREZ** allowed as how it would be *purer at zero.*

Afterwards, as they lit up their liquid plasma, Disk Librarian **JOSEPH KAYE,** in characteristically *jokey shape,* coolly described the whole affair as "just another one of the TPC's *hokey japes.*"

-CC

NAMEGRAM *Reviewed*

NAMEGRAM is an entertaining program which, like a certain Fractals program, could be advertised as "Guaranteed to Reduce Productivity", at least if you're supposed to be running that spreadsheet. You begin by entering a name; *NAMEGRAM* dissolves it and sorts the letters into a string. It then makes a shortlist of all the words in its dictionary which can made from the letters in the string. If we take as an example the string "TPC USERS CLUB", we learn that there are 342 words to be found therein, which should surprise no-one who has attended a meeting.

Once you choose your output format, *NAMEGRAM* runs through its shortlist of words found among the letters "BCCELPRSSTUU", and attempts to make words from the leftover letters.

Cryptographers are familiar with the statistics concerning the relative occurrence of the letters of the alphabet, and some writers have played with these statistics in various ways. E.V. Wright wrote in 1939 a book called *Gadsby*, in which, despite a length of 50,000 words, he does not use once the most common letter in English, "E". The author stated that the "E" key of his typewriter was tied down throughout the composition, to prevent even a single one from creeping in. More problematic is his claim that "the book may prove a valuable aid to school children in English composition."

Conversely, Lord Holland's short work, *"Eve's Legend"* (1824), uses only one vowel: "E". A typical passage:

"Men were never perfect; yet the three brethren Veres were ever esteemed, respected, revered, even when the rest, whether the select few, whether the mere herd, were left neglected."

In this vein, what's statistically improbable about the following passage?: (answer to be found elsewhere in this issue)

You believed me dead. Killed, murdered. For over a score of years I have looked for you — for you and for him. And now I have found you. Can you guess my plan? You'll die. Quickly? No, very slowly. And so pay me back for my long years of searching and dreaming of revenge. Slow dying — unavoidable dying. For you and for him. Slow and sure — dying in mind and in body. And for each pace forward a warning... a warning of special meaning for you — and for him. Meanings for pondering and puzzling. Here is warning number one."

Ellery Queen: *The Origin of Evil (1951)*:

BRUCE SCULPTS	CLUBS CREPT US	CESS CULT BURPS
LETS SCRUB CPU	PERT CUSS CLUB	CULT PUBS RECS
SEC CULT BURPS	CLUB REPS SCUT	LETS CURB CUPS
CELT CUSP URBS	CUBS CURL PEST	CURB LUST SPEC
CLEPT USSR CUB	CUBS CURS PELT	CELT SCRUBS UP
CLUB CUSP REST	SERB CULT CUSP	BLEST CPU CURS
CLUB TUPS RECS	LEST CUPS CURB	CELTS SPUR CUB
CUB CULTS REPS	CURB CUSS PELT	CLUB PEST CURS
CUBS CURL STEP	CURL SPEC TUBS	CLUB CUTS REPS
CULT CUSP REBS	CLUB CRESTS UP	CLUB PUTS RECS
CULT SPEC URBS	BEST CPUS CURL	CLUB RUTS SPEC
CURB CUSP LETS	CELTS CURB PUS	SEPT CUBS CURL
CURL SPEC STUB	CLUB CUPS REST	CULT CUPS SERB
CPU BLURTS SEC	CURT ESP CLUBS	CULT RUBS SPEC
CUR BELTS CUPS	PRESS CLUB CUT	CURB CUSP LEST
CELTS SCRUB UP	RUST CLUB SPEC	CURB SLUT SPEC
CLUB CUPS ERST	CUBS CURL PETS	

The sidebar shows a selection from NAMEGRAM's run on TPC USERS CLUB.

The heart of *NAMEGRAM* is the file DICTNARY.MSH, which, at 250k, can safely be assumed to be the list of words *NAMEGRAM* regards as legitimate. Unfortunately, its extension (.MSH) is a peculiarly appropriate description of what you see with an editor; in short, unless you register (see below), you cannot add or subtract from it, and therefore must put up with such marginal words as "sculp, cubers, rec, bur, sec, reb, scut, and brut". You can, however, choose a single word from the initial shortlist and generate only anagrams including that word, or which contain no more than one word of a specified minimum length (options from 0-4). This is advisable when the string contains many vowels. For instance, although ***DAVID BERNAT*** produced only a few anagrams, ***DAVID RANDALL BERNAT*** ran all night and crashed the computer when it ran out of disk space at 4,278,974 bytes (158,480 anagrams); and it had only reached ***darn valid dental bra*** at that.

The registration fee of $25 gets you the two-disk version of the program with the Dictionary Manager, which will allow you to manipulate the dictionary in ways not yet clear to me, as my check is in the mail. *NAMEGRAM* strikes me as well worth the money, given how many other activities with little practical application have already made their claims upon my pocket. Few non-graphics programs I know of can so interest a non-techie, and a printout of anagrams of a friend's name makes an entertaining fax on a birthday, or apropos of nothing.

-CC

NAMEGRAM Copyright 1985, 1989 by Neil J. Rubenking
86 Midcrest Way, San Francisco, CA 94131 Registration: $25 to: Support Group, Inc. P.O. Box 130 / McHenry, MD 21541

Operating Assumptions

This month, **Roger Boisvert** *turns to the outlook for Operating Systems and software application development in the Japanese marketplace*

Since comparatively few installed machines in Japan can run either OS/2 or UNIX, it will be a long time before either gains large market acceptance. However, the momentum has begun. UNIX is now gaining a reasonable market share with new computer purchases. Sony's release of NEWS machines about two years ago meant that inexpensive hardware with good support and a reasonable quantity of software was available. SUN has also been doing well in Japan, and has excelled in getting other vendors to adopt both its RISC chips and OS as standards; Toshiba, Fujitsu, Fuji-Xerox, OKI, and several other major computer vendors are supplying boxes running SUN OS. As is to be expected, these vendors have begun making minor proprietary modifications to SUN OS. The damage is not nearly as severe as it is under DOS, however. Toshiba changed the keyboard driver for their SUN boxes, but to the best of my knowledge, all SUN application software packages still run on Toshiba SUN clones. Only the keyboard drivers need to be adapted. The same is true for Fuji-Xerox and most other resellers. UNIX machine sales are growing very rapidly, and will take a reasonable chunk of the high-end PC and low-end mini-computer markets. My estimate is that UNIX box sales are growing at about 40% annually through 1989 and 1990. OS/2 has had minimal sales to date in Japan, as is true in the U.S. Here again, some proprietarization has taken place. NEC announced they would not allow NEC OS/2 application software to function under OS/2 on another manufacturer's machines. Microsoft battled them over this, and it appears that in future versions of OS/2 NEC will finally be forced to accept some standardization. Some apparent problems with OS/2 will slow its usability as a cross-vendor portable OS. One of the most significant problems I've heard of involves keyboard drivers. Since keyboard drivers are not a problem in the US, the code was buried too deeply to make portability easy. OS/2 currently must be adapted heavily for each proprietary hardware platform. Microsoft (in private discussions with many people) has recognized the problem, and a future version of OS/2 should address it. I do not expect, though, that the problems will be fixed until

AFTER OS/2 ver. 2.0 is released. Solutions will probably appear by versions 2.1 or 2.2.Most OS/2 versions being sold today in Japan are about a year behind the American equivalent. Here again, the most updated versions of OS/2 in Japan are for NECs and, not surprisingly, IBM.

UNIX suffers none of OS/2's portability problems, and is already enjoying good sales. It is clear that UNIX will grab reasonable market share before OS/2 does, and that UNIX applications will be much more portable than OS/2 applications in Japan for several years to come. UNIX will eventually be more important in Japan than in the US. I expect OS/2 will, however, eventually surpass UNIX sales. This process will probably not take place until 1995 or 1996.

Many people recognize that the most serious problem for the PC industry in Japan today is the proprietary nature of the Japanese computing scene, and the resulting lack of portable software. This, combined with government forecasts of a shortfall of more than 970,000 programmers by the year 2000, has caused much concern. The Japanese government has backed several programs designed to help ease the labor shortage. Some of them are designed to provide more programmers, and others are designed to create systems which will ease software and application development, i.e. make it less labor intensive. Two examples of attempts to reduce the labor content of software development, and to increase the productivity of applications developers are the SIGMA project, and CASE tools. The five year, 25 billion yen Sigma project, backed by MITI and more than 120 companies, 11 of which are foreign, is perhaps the most important of these. The objective of Sigma is to create open standard software and utilities running under UNIX. A quick and dirty description of the software they are trying to create is "Unix-based CASE (Computer Aided Software Engineering) tools". CASE uses software to create other software, much like a 4-D application generator for a database package. CASE, however, goes much further in that it maintains within it application descriptions, and supposedly a repository of information on data descriptions, data locations, etc. SIGMA, however, aims much higher - to create CASE with strong development tools, and adds many of the benefits of object oriented programming, most significantly in the reusability of existing code from previously developed applications, and accessibility of existing code in libraries available to all users, not just users in the same company. The 5-year Sigma project may not actually create any usable software, but it should strongly focuses developers' attention on the importance of the portability issue.

Software Development

Experts often say Japan is 3 to 4 years behind the U.S. in software development. I'd refine that a little. Japan is about 3 to 4 years behind the U.S. in application development, but only 2 to 3 years behind in software development on the PC side of computing. In mainframe software, most companies in Japan are much further behind, and with more advanced technologies such as client-server architecture a few Japanese companies have heard about it, most have not, and fewer still understand it. In other areas, Japan is more advanced than the U.S. In Robotics, Japan has a clear world-class lead in both actual installations and sophistication. Robotics is not merely a matter of hardware; a lot of firmware, and application development skill is required.The gap between leading edge user-companies and the followers seems much wider in Japan than in the US.

Application Development usually means one of two things, either adapting existing software to solve a particular set of needs, or writing a new piece of software, basically from scratch, to serve those needs. Software Development, is clearly more basic, and designed to be much more flexible, than Applications Development. Japanese companies have improved in software development, but are still hampered by incompatible hardware platforms. Perhaps because of their growing ability to bridge platforms, they are now in a better position to begin writing useful, flexible software packages. Other problems still lie in the way however, manpower shortage being the most basic. This will be discussed further later.

Most software developed to date by Japanese companies has been very narrow in focus, closely resembling the definition of application software. Historically Japanese software has been highly customized, designed to be quickly adapted to a very narrow set of needs. Customization for the end user was usually the goal, and the customer demanded personal attention. VARs capable of delivering personalized attention did well, and vendors of broadly applicable software did more poorly than vendors of highly specific software. In the U.S., this situation of narrow products with low adaptability was true only for a short while in the PC market, but still continues in the mainframe and mini markets. Only during the past few years has the concept

of using off-the-shelf software become recognized as potentially valuable in larger systems, and has just begun to take root in the workstation market. It is still just talk on mainframes. A few leading-edge mainframe sites have begun to use and explore the potential of using off-the-shelf software packages, thus saving tremendous applications development and maintenance time.

American software companies in Japan have begun to have an impact on Japanese software developers during the last few years. Microsoft adapted and vastly improved MultiPlan for Japanese use, followed by Ashton Tate with dBase, Lotus with 1-2-3 (many changes to suit Japanese tastes in text and chart appearances), and the creators of AutoCad. These companies have done well here, and we are beginning to see several Japanese companies learning to create highly flexible software packages. Borland, it might be added, has ported its programming languages to Japan, at reasonable prices, thus bringing modern programming tools to the Japanese masses for the first time. We might credit it for much of the change to C programming from Basic in Japan, and for that matter in the U.S. as well. C-based software is now the norm, whereas only 2 years ago it was an exception even in some major software houses.

Another area of computer technology in which Japanese companies are clearly ahead is small hand-held personal organizers. I would love to have some of the software developed for those machines on my desktop computers. Looking at what is currently available on small hand-held personal organizers, it is clear that some developers in Japan have learned some very valuable lessons. We have seen a few examples of Japanese software being successfully distributed in other parts of the world. One would need to be exceedingly foolish to believe they couldn't learn to market sophisticated software as successfully as they have marketed hardware.

With Applications Development defined as solution-specific software, Japanese developers have a long way to go. Yet in many larger systems, Japanese companies have proven their ability to design and implement large, complex, strategically important systems that support the core of their and their clients' businesses. Some Japanese systems houses have developed the skill to work with hundreds of programmers all working on the same project at the same time, and finish development on time. This is something very few foreign companies have succeeded in. This should give some foreign systems houses some cause for thought. Is it possible to transfer those skills to external markets?

Beyond Hardware Applications Development in Robotics is highly advanced. In office applications, Japan as a whole seems woefully behind. Yet in factory and warehouse automation the most advanced Japanese companies are world class. One difference between Japan and the U.S. in regard to factory and warehouse automation is the much larger gap between leading and trailing companies in Japan. Japanese retailing applications likewise are both ahead, and behind in hardware/software solutions. The trailing companies, in this case mom & pop shops that use antiquated equipment, are years behind leading-edge retailers.

Next month: Systems Development — the Japanese Way

Answer to Ellery Queen Mystery

The passage quoted does not contain a single occurrence of the letter "T", the second most frequent letter in English composition.

Adventures in Hypertext

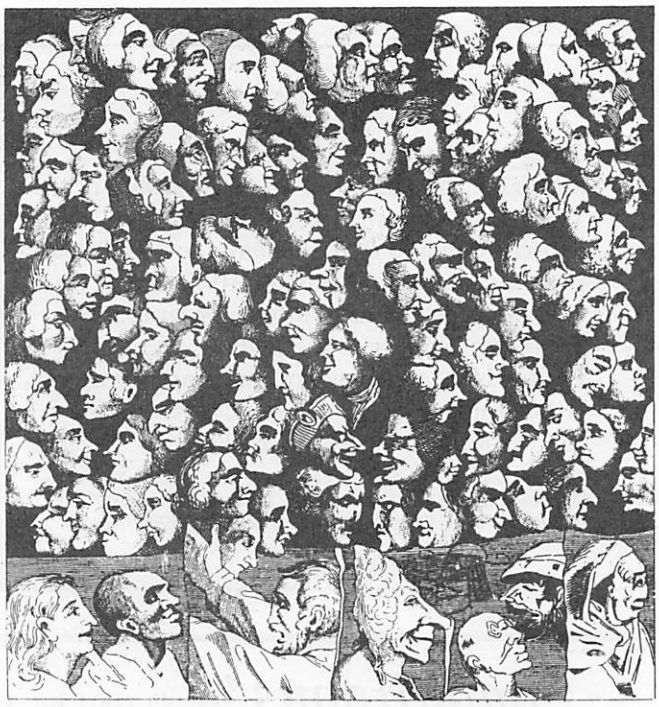
Continued from p. 17

ndexes, text databases, and custom software help systems are the most likely implementations. Still, I found that *Guide* can be useful even at home. Since it is hard to imagine all possible uses of hypertext, you might find yourself one day wishing for a way to clarify those heaps of notes on your desk (how about an integrated OCR option for *Guide*?!), or to create a menu system after you've given up on *Windows'* native Program Manager. As my wife won't stand any more cold dinners, I must stop short of describing more than half of *Guide's* features and capabilities, but I will be happy to answer questions I can regarding *Guide* on the TPC BBS and after the TPC meetings (if you buy me a beer).

-MB

TPC Review

CONSENSUS SIMULATOR



With the advent of *J-DOS/V*, Japanese software manufacturers are showing increased interest in the wide variety of software to which PC Users in the Outer Areas have become accustomed. True to form, distributors are thinking in terms of adapting foreign software to suit unique Japanese conditions. *Flight Simulator*, for instance, although having a certain following in Japan, is regarded by traditional Japanese as too blatant a metaphor for American-style individualism and aggression, a view reinforced by rumours that circulated recently in Tokyo of American military activity somewhere to the west. Future copies of *Flight Simulator* to be distributed here must, as of the next Emperor's birthday, be retrofitted with a diffusion screen.

We were with some difficulty able to secure an introduction to Shoji Oshimeru, the shy, retiring Publicity Director of **Sararisoft**, who began by assuring us that " 'Director' is too strong a word...", but we cut that short right away. Sararisoft produces the popular new corporate package *Consensus Simulator*.

Like many virtual control programs, it is a spin-off of the Defense Dept, and it is secretly credited with the lightning speed with which Japan has shown itself able to establish initiate immensely complex consensus-building procedures in response to stimuli from the "outside" world, such as the recent demands for attention from the Persian Gulf, procedures which have impressed decision engineers and cognitive psychologists alike with their durability — many are *still fully operational.* Oshimeru-san grins sweetly as he asserts, "The New Human Technology Has Made Us to Regain Our Pride in a Japan that Can Say 'Saaaa'..." The program is the result of a research project initiated in Chiba shortly after the completion of Narita Airport, when Japanese policymakers realised the vulnerability of relying entirely on homegrown consensus. The program as finally released is capable of importing consensi in several external formats, including US, UN, CNN, and TOP40, but few local users are expected to avail themselves of these options.

Consensus Simulator is of course a Virtual Reality application. The user begins by briefing the system in any standard format concerning the kind of consensus sought. The issue can even be input, although most users will opt for the default: "*Ah, so desu ka*?". (Registered users can of course choose in advance the decision that is to be reached.) Upon donning the VR helmet, (shaped like a golfing cap) and the unsoiled white Power Gloves, the user enters a simulated environment of pensive nods, approving glances, and admiring gazes. Subliminal glimpses of cash-stuffed envelopes further reinforce the impression of deep spiritual empathy and unanimity, and the user emerges from the session well able to cloak his personal sense of responsibility in the collective camouflage.

In interactive mode, ***Consensus Simulator*** can provide, as feedback to a querying system, a simulacrum of the consensus building procedure as observed from without. After the voice-synthesized message: "We're just deciding on your problem now!" comes the shuffling of papers and tentative polyphony of a hushed and sincere discussion behind closed doors, which can be fractally generated in IRT, or Inquirer's Real Time, from a snippet of taped confusion in a karaoke bar or an ill-erased answerphone message tape. This is seen as a quantum leap in "on-hold" technology, at least comparable to NTT's recent across-the-board upgrading from "Für Elise" to "Home On the Range".

-CC

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One year's mailed subscription to this magazine costs ¥6,000. Full membership of the TPC Users' Group, which includes the subscription and other benefits, costs ¥10,000 per year plus an additional ¥10,000 at the start. Send a check or postal money order for the appropriate figure to the address on page 2. For further details (e.g. of corporate, family, or student membership options), please write, call the hotline, or ask on the BBS.

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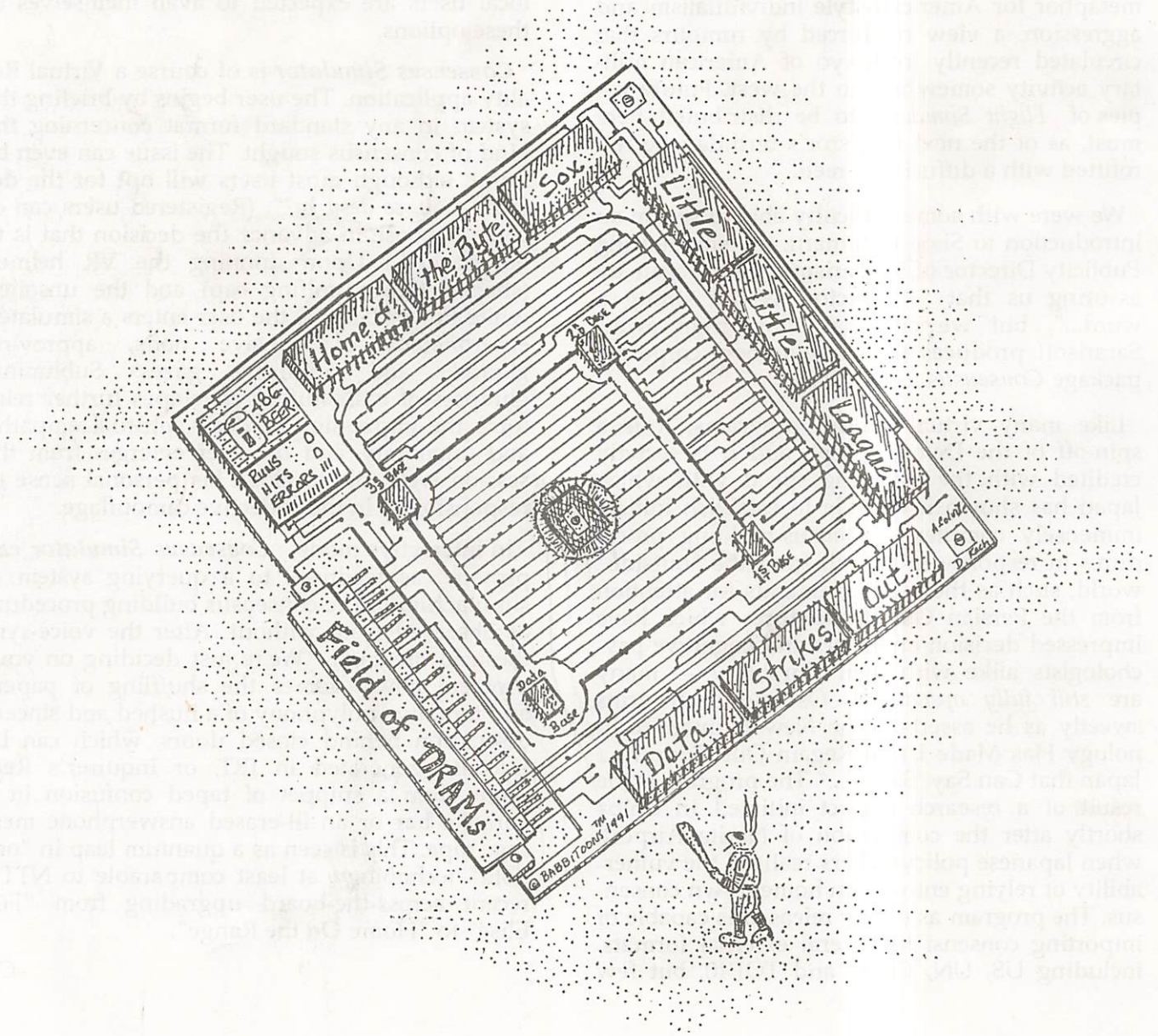
Next Meeting Thursday, April 4th

The next meeting of the TPC will take place, as usual, in the basement of the Tokyo Union Church, Omotesando, Harajuku. Doors open at 6:00 PM, for the informal first hour of the meeting, during which an intriguing video of fractals will be shown, and members will be able to circulate and converse before the main portion of the meeting, which will begin around 7:00.

The meeting will end around 9:00 PM, whereupon many members will adjourn to Shakey's for the traditional post-CPU pizzae.

Irrashaimase!

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